the services of the private couriers, necessary amendment to the Indian Post Office Act, 1898 is required.

Surrender of MTNL phones by subscribers

2107. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a large number of MTNL landline phone subscribes have returned their phones to MTNL in the year 2004-05 and 2005-06;

(b) the number of such phones returned to MTNL in the last two years in Delhi and Mumbai respectively;

(c) the reasons for the poor service of MTNL;

(d) how does MTNL propose to improve its various services; and

(e) the steps taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The details of landline phones surrendered in MTNL in the year 2004-05 and 2005-06 are as under:

Year	Number of phones surrendered	
	Delhi	Mumbai
2004-05	1,28,795	1,63,643
2005-06 (up to 31.01.06)	1,02.580	1,12,899

Some of the reasons for surrender of landline phones are as given below:

(i) There is general trend towards surrender of phones as options are now available with the customers to switch over from one operator to another operator.

(ii) Landline phone users are switching over to mobile phone as it is more convenient and provides roaming facility.

(iii) Closure of company/firm.

(iv) Surrender of additional phone due to economic reasons.

(v) Change of address etc.

(c) Sir, due to legacy copper network which is prone to various types of faults, some of the parameters of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) guidelines are not met by MTNL for landline telephones. However, they may not be termed as poor.

In GSM segment, quality of MTNL service are meeting the TRAI guidelines and is better than many other private operators in Mumbai and Delhi.

(d) and (e) MTNL is continuously taking measures to improve the services by modernizing the network to reduce faults, providing innovative services in line with the emerging trends, reviewing the tariffs to suit all segments of society, improvement of the customer relations etc. The steps taken by MTNL to improve telecom services are given in the enclosed Statement.

Statement

Steps taken by MTNL to improve telecom services

A. MTNL is modernizing its network with the following measures to reduce faults:

(i) The fixed line network of MTNL has been made fully digital, with high capacity exchanges which are capable to provide new services.

(ii) Computerized Fault Reporting system for round the clock complaints is available through Interactive Voice Response Systems (IVRS).

(iii) Rehabilitation of external plant to reduce faults is being done. This involves dressing of D.P. and Cabinets, replacement of drop wire etc.

(iv) Internet and Broad Band services are available to its customers.

(v) A promotion scheme 1+1 has been launched to give one additonal connection to existing MTNL customers when telephone is working for more than six months.

B. Providing new telecom services at affordable prices:

(i) Providing value added services like phone plus, call waiting, call forwarding, wake up, calling line identifications presentation (CLIP), narrow band ISDN, free phone service, VCC, premium rate service, account care calling and virtual private network services, virtual phone service, internet based services like e-mail, internet telephony, web housing, web surfing, bill enquiry.

C. Improving its customer relations:

(i) Full-fledged marketing divisions headed by the General Manager in both Delhi and Mumbai.

(ii) Eight numbers of Sanchar Haats have been opened in Delhi to sell items like telephone terminals, VCC cards, prepaid cards etc. for both landline and mobile services.

(iii) "Local Royal" bonus points scheme to give redeemable products like VCC, cordless phone, Internet account, CDMA phones etc. has been introduced.

(iv) Commercial procedures simplification.

(v) Toll-free numbers, 1500 in Delhi and 1509 in Mumbai have been provided to give a single window information.

(vi) Billing Service on Telephone number 1661 launched for telephone bill complaints.

(vii) Commercially important Persons (CIP) are identified and graded volume discount based on usage of telephone ranging from 2% to 9% is given to such customers.

(viii) Introduced customized tariff packages as per monthly usage pattern.

(ix) Introduced on-line services "Newsline" and "inforline" in Delhi and "Edonline" in Mumbai for providing latest information about MTNL services, products, procedures, news etc.

(x) For corporate customers a high level core group has been formed for special treatment.

(xi) Regular revision of its tariffs for its PSTN, mobile, Internet N/W to meet aspiration of the customers.

D. Facilitate easy payment of telephone bills to meet the requirement of all segments of society.

Line online payment, Electronic Clearance Scheme (ECS), Automatic Cheque Deposit Machines, credit and debit card payment scheme.

Appointment on compassionate grounds in BSNL and MTNL

2108. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether appointment on compassionate grounds of the wards of deceased officers/employees has been stopped in MTNL and BSNL;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether there is an acute shortage of staff in MTNL and BSNL;

(d) whether vacancies caused due to the death or retirements of employees have not been filled up since a long time; and

(e) if so, the steps being taken by Government for making appointments on compassionate grounds?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) and (b) While appointments on compassionate grounds are continuing in BSNL, the Board of Directors of MTNL have imposed a ban on compassionate ground appointments and other types of recruitment except appointments is key areas. It is pertinent to mention here that a Voluntary Retirement Scheme has been introduced in MTNL for rightsizing the organization.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) and (e) Creation and filing up of the posts are continuous administrative processes. While vacancies caused due to the death or retirement of employees are filled up including by way of compassionate appointment (though not on 1:1 basis) in BSNL, MTNL is engaged in rightsizing the organization by way of introduction of Voluntary Retirement Scheme.